

*'I wish someone had given me this book 50 years ago so that I didn't waste 10 years of my life failing to know God.'*

**Peter Robinson**, Professor of Computer Technology, University of Cambridge

*'Read this book if you think that being an agnostic makes sense: or give it to anyone who says he/she does not know whether Christianity is true and whether it matters. The authors, with their idiosyncratic sense of humour, show that the big issues of life should not be ducked, and that to say "I don't know", for whatever reason, is a cop-out. Investigate the evidence, explore their reasoning and consider the most coherent explanation for the realities of life and death, and the impact of Jesus on those realities. I think you will find the book, short though it is, both challenging and compelling.'*

**Sir Jeremy Cooke**, Retired High Court Judge

*'So much more than a presentation of evidence, this book is a compelling argument for why sceptics should embrace asking questions of Jesus, and why the answers mean it's worth the effort. I enjoyed it all, and found myself strengthened in my own faith*

*as I read. A gift for sceptics and believers alike – buy it and share it!*

**Amy Wicks**, Associate Pastor for Women's Discipleship, St Silas Church Glasgow

*'A very intelligently written short book that explains with simplicity, humour and winsomeness the main tenants of the Christian faith. This will be edifying for believers and intriguing for agnostics. There is nothing quite like it in the market. I highly recommend this unique read.'*

**Gavin Peacock**, Former Professional Footballer

*'As I read this short book, to my surprise I found myself subconsciously making a list of family and friends I was desperately hoping would read it! Why was that? First because Sach and Gemmell have both taken very seriously and listened very hard to the questions of sceptics and agnostics. And secondly, because they have answered their questions with logic, learning and not a small dose of fun. I thoroughly recommend this eminently engaging and very useful book.'*

**Rico Tice**, All Souls Langham Place and Christianity Explored

ARE YOU  
**100% SURE**  
YOU WANT  
TO BE AN  
AGNOSTIC?

ANDREW SACH &  
JONATHAN GEMMELL

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To Jacob Beynon  
and to  
Aileen and Isaac Gemmell



# The Agnostic Diagnostic

Please take a few moments to complete the questionnaire over the page before you begin, rating each of the statements on the scale below.

<b>1</b> <b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Agree</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Disagree</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Strongly disagree</b>
I regularly carry a placard around central London with this slogan.	I smile weakly at people carrying a placard with this slogan.	'Meh.'	I smile politely when someone expresses this opinion while inwardly despising them.	If someone expresses this opinion in my presence, I can't guarantee their safety.

ARE YOU 100% SURE YOU WANT TO BE AN AGNOSTIC?

- The Battle of Hastings took place in the year 1066.
- The universe created itself without any help from God (who doesn't exist).
- The teachings of Jesus and Muhammad are equally good for society.
- There is no such thing as absolute truth.
- Torture is absolutely wrong.
- Jesus defeated death and is alive today.
- More people should be vegans.
- My conclusions about Jesus are based on sufficient investigation.
- I'm 100% sure I want to be an agnostic.



# In God We Doubt?

There's a joke doing the rounds at the moment that arguably isn't the best way to begin a book, because it doesn't work written down. But here goes anyway...

People in our society are becoming more religious. Most of them are nuns. When you ask them what religious beliefs they hold, they answer, 'Nun.' (Or actually they say, 'None,' which is why the joke only makes sense spoken out loud.) Ha ha ha.

Perhaps that's you, as you pick up this little paperback. You're a 'none'.

You're not a nihilist – theirs is the bleak philosophy that says there's no truth and no meaning and nothing matters. That's not you. You don't believe in *nothing* that much.

You're not an atheist – theirs is the belief (!) that there is no God, and everything we see

came about purely by chance, and human beings are nothing but ‘survival machines’,<sup>1</sup> and human thoughts are no more than the movement of electrons and fluctuations in the concentration of neurotransmitters, and we are hurtling through space with no ultimate destiny besides the heat death of the universe. Personally, you’re not that confident in God’s non-existence.

You’re not a fundamentalist. In fact you’re quite concerned when people are committed to something so passionately that they are willing to die for it (and might, in some cases, kill others for it). Enthusiasts can be exclusive. Dogmatism is dangerous. Creeds can be cruel. Believers can be blinkered. Anything can be alphabetised. You are wary of the excesses of any belief system.

You prefer to identify as a humble agnostic. You’re just not sure. You’re not saying anyone is totally wrong, but neither are you prepared to say anyone has got it 100% right. In the Agnostic Diagnostic, you consistently scored somewhere in the middle. You want to be honest with yourself and with everyone else and hold up your hand and say, ‘I just don’t know.’

Agnosticism is on the rise. Wikipedia maintains a ‘List of Agnostics’, which includes the authors Franz Kafka and Matt Groening (of *Simpsons* fame); the tycoons Elon Musk and Warren Buffett; the actors Leonardo DiCaprio and Charlie Chaplin; the philosophers Noam Chomsky and David Hume; the scientists Marie Curie and Charles Darwin.<sup>2</sup> However, few have written explicitly in defence of their agnosticism. An exception is the broadcaster John Humphrys, who in 2008 published his book *In God We Doubt*:

*So my own spiritual journey – if that’s not too high-falutin’ a notion – has taken me from my childish Big Questions to my ultimate failure to find any corresponding Big Answers. Along the way I have experienced the indoctrination of confirmation classes, the anticlimax of the Eucharist, the futility of prayer, the contradiction between the promises made by an allegedly merciful, loving God and the reality of a suffering world. So I end up – so far, at any rate – as a doubter.<sup>3</sup>*

Maybe you, like Humphrys, have had a religious upbringing or passed through a spiritual phase, but find that it no longer satisfies. Or perhaps you have always seen yourself as neutral. Possibly you'd quite like to believe in something out there, but you're not willing to commit unthinkingly. The comedian Marcus Brigstocke puts it well:

*The truth, as I see it, is that I would rather stay in a place of confusion amongst similar restless souls shuffling about in the hope there might be a sign pointing in one direction or another, than leap aboard whichever bandwagon looks like it's got some momentum behind it and a confident driver. We might find God. We should probably have a plan for that in case we startle Him and He goes for us. I don't mind if we don't find Him. I'd be just as happy to discover that whatever road this is that I'm on, I'm not walking it alone.<sup>4</sup>*

Whatever your starting point, you're open-minded enough to have started a book that aims (we may as well be up front about this)

to persuade you to abandon your agnosticism. Thanks. We want to reassure you at the outset that we are not into blind faith; we are into evidence, history, joy, forgiveness, truth, eternal life and honest self-reflection. We think some of what we have to share will surprise you. And we even dare to hope that by the end you won't be so sure that you are unsure.

I (Andrew) was once an agnostic myself, and this is the sort of book I wish someone had put into my hands as a confused teenager. I can sympathise with your questions, your indifference, your irritation, your fears. I'm pleased now to be a Christian and to have the opportunity to share how I got there.

I (Jon) have had many, many conversations with sceptics. This book contains the things, in hindsight, I wish I'd said.

In lieu of a contents page, here's an outline of the journey we hope you'll let us take you on. In 'What Kind of Agnostic Are You Anyway?' we discover that not all doubters are alike. In 'Meet the Truth', we consider the kind of evidence that convinced a bloke called John that his mate had created the universe. In 'Blind

Men Are Sometimes the Best Eyewitnesses!’ we look in detail at one of Jesus’ most famous miracles – and a first-century attempt to debunk it. In ‘The Curious Case of Mr P’, I (Andrew) talk about the time I was arrested, and we draw parallels between the British justice system and the weighing of biblical claims. In ‘Even More Syllogisms (for the Enthusiast)’, we apply ruthless logic to subjects like the Big Bang, the problem of suffering and the mystery of the Trinity. In ‘It’s Dangerous to Remain Agnostic’, we explore why sitting on the fence is not in fact a neutral option. In ‘Who’s Playing Hide-and-Seek?’ we turn the tables on the popular notion that God is elusive. In ‘We Write This to Make Our Joy Complete’, we tell the story of a phoney preacher whose faith, in the end, became authentic.